

WANDERERS APPEAR TO HAVE MASTERED THE 4-2-4 SYSTEM

Hitchin Town 3, Wycombe Wanderers 3

USING their 4-2-4 system Wycombe Wanderers re-discovered their old fire and determination at Hitchin on Saturday. If this performance signals the start of a revival for the Loakes Park club, it could not have come at a more opportune moment bearing in mind tomorrow's F.A. Amateur Cup match.

In fact, Wanderers might have enjoyed the added tonic of a clear-cut win, had not Hitchin equalised with a penalty in the last 60 seconds.

Although the 'Free Press' commented earlier in the season that Wycombe should discard the 4-2-4 plan, it does appear that the players have now mastered the system, more or less to perfection.

Perhaps, one criticism would be justified. Has manager-coach Barry Darvill chosen the right players to operate the vital link-role position? There can be no question of Barry Baker's suitability for the job, but certainly Charlie Gale looked "lost" in his new role. Peter Eyres may well be suited to act as the second link-man, when remembering his sparkling displays at wing-half.

Nevertheless, Wanderers fought for every ball with new spirit. The forwards' workrate was far higher than it has been in recent matches, with all eleven players running into space intelligently.

HITCHIN ON TOP

However, for the first 10 minutes Hitchin dominated play forcing Wycombe back on to the defensive. In the first minute Maskell was hurt diving at the feet of the oncoming Fulkes.

Maskell was kept busy in this opening spell going full-length to save efforts from Gogan and Summers. The back four of Beck, Faulkner, Rundle and Eyres gave little away although they still stand far too square.

After surviving Hitchin's opening burst, Wycombe came more into the game and took the lead in the 16th minute. Worley, back after serving his 14-day suspension, crossed the ball into the Hitchin area. Horseman outjumped two defenders to head goalwards and Merrick rushed in to score his first goal since October 21.

The Wanderers' lead was short-lived as Hitchin replied only two minutes later. Brooks' free-kick into the goalmouth was punched out by Maskell, but Fulkes pounced on the opportunity to crash the ball home.

Wycombe regained the initiative in the 30th minute. Horseman's free-kick, on the edge of the box, was charged down. Beck lobbed the rebound back into the area and Horseman brought the ball down, under control, before firing past Turner.

In the second half Wycombe's forwards still impressed with their non-stop running up front, tactics which considerably upset the home rearguard. It was a pity that the Wycombe wingers did not test 'keeper Turner with a few more crosses, as he looked far from confident when dealing with several high balls in the first half.

As it was, Hitchin, again, opened in brisk style when Gladwin clipped the bar with a fierce cross-shot. For a while Wycombe seemed to lose a little of their earlier cohesion and composure.

The home side got back on level terms in the 66th minute. Baigent split the defence with a glorious through pass and Waldock hammered the ball in.

HITS THE BAR

This goal seemed to shake Wycombe into action. Horseman might have scored twice in the space of a minute, but each time placed his effort inches wide. Samuels, who had been grafting hard in mid-field, came through to meet a Merrick cross only to head against the bar.

The Wanderers were rewarded for their continual pressure just three minutes from the end. A long raking cross from Worley found Tony Horseman's head and, although Brooks hammered the ball into his own net in a desperate attempt to clear Tony's header had already crossed the line.

There was just enough time remaining for Hitchin to mount one final attack. Waldock slotted a pass through the middle and Fulkes was half-way round Maskell, before the 'keeper brought him crashing to the ground. From the resulting spot-kick Waldock made no mistake to earn Hitchin a point.

Wycombe: J. Maskell; J. Beck, V. Faulkner, I. Rundle, P. Eyres; B. Baker, C. Gale; L. Worley, K. Samuels, A. Horseman, L. Merrick.

Hitchin 3 Wycombe 3

IN A game of raw excitement, Wycombe opened the score in the 16th minute when goalkeeper Turner misjudged the flight of a high centre. The ball bounced to L Merrick who stabbed it in. Two minutes later Ken Fulkes equalised.

A Horseman put Wycombe ahead in the 30th minute after a free kick mix-up, only for Waldock to equalise in the 66th minute.

Wycombe took a lucky lead when J Brookes put into his own net, but justice was done in the last minute when Waldock scored from a penalty after Fulkes had been fouled.